

*(Note: Monte Noelke is recuperating from major surgery, so until he mans the keyboard again, we thought we would pull some Shortgrass Country from the files.)*

As everyone connected with cattle knows by now, one of the Congressional subcommittees has announced that a serious beef shortage is developing in the nation. From the same body it was further charged that cowmen needed to be brought under a price control system and meat import restrictions lifted. The gist of the matter seemed to be that some stalwart vote-grabbing eastern politician was ready and willing to give the cow people a scalping that'd make one of Geronimo's best jobs look like a home permanent.

Shortgrassers' reactions to the startling proclamation were impossible to obtain. The annual vigil of the wool incentive checks was underway. On top of that distraction, the census enumerators had just finished sapping the citizens' minds. People are hard to interview when they've been watching the mail calls every day and at the same time worrying about such matters as how many leaky faucets they had in their houses on the night of March the 27th.

The scene was so quiet, you could hear the wastepaper settling in the post office baskets. Around the banking

houses, customers were having to be awfully careful not to rattle the chains on ballpoints attached to the tellers' windows. Ranchmen never are a boisterous lot on visits to the jugs, but I've never seen them as subdued as they were at this period.

The community-wide intermission was an unfortunate thing. Don't misunderstand; I'm not going to say that the threat from Washington should have been answered by charging off up there to deny the committee's findings. Oh, no. Taking a lobbying trip to Constantinople would be a more sensible venture than storming the Potomac.

What we should have been doing was planning some strategy. If the government is hell-bent on running the cow business, then why don't we strike a trade and swap all our cattle for the Postal Service?

It's a double-dead cinch that freighting mail is a more dignified way to lose money than herding cows. Postal officials are never seen wallowing in the dusty aftermath of corrals; nor do they ever come home at night with their boots encrusted with the symbol of the working cowman. Furthermore, ranchers are ideal prospects for the mail sorting game. Plenty of the ranch boys could catch on to selling stamps at a loss, or losing a dollar a hundred on

bulk mail, without ever going to school. Cattle have been moving that way for years.

In a few more lessons, the herders could also be taught to smash packages and send the Seattle mail by way of Daytona Beach.

Of course, we'd probably have to pack the street deliveries on horseback, but think what experts we'd make looking after the dead-letter boxes.

The whole country would profit by this plan. Politicians could make raising cattle the big success they've made out of running the Postal Service. The dissatisfied consumer could have imported hotdogs from Cairo and hamburger meat scraped from the outdoor butcher shops in India. Best of all, the ex-cow persons could get mail delivered and forget about the days when they had to take a cussing every time the price of potted meat got within six-bits of the market on hair pins.

Before you make up your mind to fight federal intervention, take this idea under consideration. Always remember what the Indians used to say about their crises. "A porcupine quill full of the right kind of medicine is worth a canoe full of the wrong kind of prevention." -(4-16-70)